

>> Goodbye Bean Station

BY **GEORGE ZHOOKOFF** WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM JEANNE & JR SLATEN, ELAINE HENDERSON, RICK DENNY, JIM GALBAVY, RICK WATERS, AND KEN BURTON.



Al and Marti Samsel

The GMC Dixielanders were founded November 6, 1988. Founding members Marti and Al Samsel understood what future opportunities would now be possible for Southeastern GMC owners. Al thought about the guys getting together to share technical expertise and help each other with operational and maintenance aspects of the GMC. Marti thought about a place where the ladies could socialize while spouses got their knuckles greasy! The Samsels began the venue build-up of the GMC Dixielanders Spring Rally location known worldwide as “Bean Station”.

What started out as a garage/barn has grown into a club house that includes kitchen facilities, covered meeting space to house over 100 meeting attendees and the dining facilities to feed them. A shop area which includes a pit fully stocked with tools of all sorts. A side shed concrete pad that is covered for coach work not requiring pit access. More than 50 water, dump, and electric hook-ups.

Amazing things have been done by an incredible group of men and women over the years. The shop, the pit, and the shed have seen almost everything done that could be done to our old coaches. Over the years, club members have changed engines, rebuilt, and replaced transmissions, changed final drives, hubs, knuckles, steering, and suspension components, 1-tons, reaction arm systems,

bogies, brakes, bearings, windows, ac units, seats, windshield wiper motors, and even generators. Early on members were very supportive of new owners trying to understand the GMC. Current club members work hard to carry on that tradition. The work completed was treated as seminars, teaching others what the older hands knew and how to apply that knowledge. It has been with camaraderie that the Dixielanders worked and played hand-in-hand.

Marti’s objective of socializing had a basis in the Kentucky Derby. Centering the rally weekend on Derby Day had an immediate impact. From the very first rally, Marti spent countless hours keeping track of the reservations, meal planning, shopping for food and supplies, making decisions about how much food to purchase, cooking daily breakfasts, suppers, and occasional lunches too. The world renowned Kentucky Derby Party was held every year to sample Mint Juleps, watch the Derby, win the Derby raffle, and conduct the Ladies Derby Chapeau Contest. Marti and Al provided the facilities, tables, an eclectic mix of chairs, stoves, refrigerators, microwaves, freezers, dishes, cookware, silverware, furniture, and TV at their own expense. As rally attendance grew over the years Marti moved to “management” and the rally support group increased in folks. From the early days of Trula and Ray Bingham to current hosts Rose and Ray (crack of dawn coffee barista) Whelan and the consummate rally hostess and host, Jeanne and JR Slaten.

The lady Dixielanders have always considered Bean Station a men’s rally. Most women never see the men (except at

meals) from arrival until departure. The ladies were adept at creating their own entertainment. One highlight was to walk down the hill to the Dollar General and make a few purchases. Of course there was the continuous game of hand & foot and sometimes other-not-so-famous card games. For several years a book club review was held in order to recommend what club members had enjoyed reading. There was always lots of food. Members were asked to bring a potluck dish, dessert, and appetizer. No one ever went home hungry.

When JR announced “It is with great sadness that I have to say that the annual Bean Station rallies have come to an end. There are several reasons for the termination but mostly, “It is time”. Club members were all disappointed. But it was a great run. A great rally where considerable work was accomplished, lots of old and new friends, greasy hands, and delicious meals. Oh yes and continual coffee. The bull session in the garage and the card games in the meeting room lasted much later than usual that last night – nobody really wanted them to end.

Thanks to all who have attended, volunteered, and worked to make the rallies special. May God keep you safe as you travel and may you realize your many blessings to have been a part of the Bean Station Rallies. Much love and many heartfelt thanks go to Marti and Al for sharing their home, resources, time, and hard work to host this event for 29 wonderful years!

“Although the rallies are over, everyone is welcome to stop over and say hello; just not 65 coaches at one time,” said Marti and Al.



GMCMH Chapters



A post from the GMC forum by Rick Denney:

I am sure the Dixielanders will find a way to have a work rally in the future, but it will take some commitment from younger folks (plus the right venue) to make it possible.

Which leads me to two points:

1. When a good thing is available – participate and support it.
2. When a good thing is not available – pitch in to replace it.

What makes owning a GMC great is the connection with other GMC owners. It is easy for younger owners – kids still in the house, still working, family responsibilities, independent and hungry for solitude – to go their own way. But that is not the best way to own a GMC. Without the community, it will die. It is the community that keeps the necessary cottage industry and mutual support alive. But that community justifies itself. Eventually, those who attend regularly become friends, and rallies are no longer the alternative to a vacation, they become the “best kind of vacation”.

So, join clubs. Attend rallies. Make friends. Help make things happen. Let us find a way to make a new Bean Station.

